

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6659

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA AND THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY (IEA)

REF: STATE 228982 (NOTAL)

1. REFTEL REQUESTED EMBASSY UPDATE ON GOA POSITION
RESPECTING IEA MEMBERSHIP.

2. EMBOFF REVIEWED QUESTION IN DETAIL WITH HUMPHREYS,
ASSISTANT SECRETARY ECONOMIC POLICY DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS 30 SEPTEMBER. THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE TO DATE ON
GOA POSITION ON MEMBERSHIP QUESTION. AS INDICATED IN
CONVERSATIONS IN CANBERRA AND WASHINGTON IN PAST YEAR,
GOA DURING FORMATIVE STAGES OF IEA WAS INTERESTED IN
EXPLORING, WITHOUT COMMITMENT, THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE
OPTION OF A PARTIAL MEMBERSHIP MIGHT BE OPEN. SUCH
PARTIAL MEMBERSHIP WOULD HAVE INVOLVED PARTICIPATION IN
LONG RANGE TECHNICAL PROGRAM OF IEA, BUT WITHOUT
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PARTICIPATION IN OIL SHARING SCHEME. WE HAVE THE

IMPRESSION GOA IS STILL INTERESTED IN THE POSSIBILITY THAT EVENTUALLY SOME ARRANGEMENT OF THIS KIND MAY BE OPEN FOR ITS CONSIDERATION BUT THIS IS NOT A QUESTION OF IMPORTANCE TO IT AT THIS TIME. IN THIS GENERAL CONNECTION WE NOTE OCCASIONAL REFERENCES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH GOA TO THE SPECIAL FEATURES SURROUNDING NORWAY'S PARTICIPATION IN IEA.

3. THERE HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN A SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT IN GOA'S OVERALL POSTURE TOWARD INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSIONS ON RESOURCES INCLUDING ENERGY QUESTIONS. UNTIL VERY RECENTLY, THE PREVAILING VIEW IN GOA COUNCILS, LED BY MINISTER FOR MINERALS AND ENERGY CONNOR, WAS ONE OF RIGID OPPOSITION TO AUSTRALIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN ANY TYPE OF INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS ON RAW MATERIALS, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ENERGY. DESPITE SOME EXCEPTIONS TO THIS POSITION, SUCH AS IBA MEMBERSHIP, THIS VIEW BROADLY PREVAILED ON MAJOR ISSUES AND WAS THE DETERMINING FACTOR IN AUSTRALIA'S FINAL DECISION TO STAY OUT OF IEA.

4. DURING PAST WEEKS THE TRANSFER OF THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MINERALS AND ENERGY SIR LENOX HEWITT OUT OF THAT POSITION, AND THE CREATION OF A POWERFUL CABINET COMMITTEE HEADED BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO BE THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY ON RESOURCES POLICY ISSUES HAS GREATLY REDUCED THE INFLUENCE OF MR. CONNER AND THE VIEW HE REPRESENTS. THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN CHANGES IN PETROLEUM POLICY AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S SEPTEMBER 24 STATEMENTS REVISING THE GOA GUIDELINES ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT ARE PRODUCTS OF THE NEW CABINET COMMITTEE AND ITS CONUNTERPART COMMITTEE AT THE PERMANENT HEAD LEVEL.

5. ONE OTHER PRODUCT OF THE NEW POLICY MACHINERY IS AN INTERPARTMENTAL DECISION WHICH REVERSES THE PREVIOUS GOA POSITION NOT GENERALLY TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE DISCUSSIONS. THE NEW POSTURE DEVELOPED BY A DFA-LED WORKING COMMITTEE AND APPROVED

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BY THE SENIOR COMMITTEES PRESCRIBES THAT AUSTRALIA WILL IN GENERAL BE DISPOSED IN FAVOR OF PARTICIPATING IN EXPLORATORY INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSIONS IN THE RESOURCES AREA. THIS IS OF COURSE WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE QUITE SEPARATE QUESTION OF WHETHER AUSTRALIA WOULD WISH TO ENTER OR ABSTAIN FROM ANY PARTICULAR ARRANGEMENTS OR COMMITMENTS WHICH MIGHT BE DEVELOPED IN SUCH DISCUSSIONS.

6. WE ARE INFORMED, HOWEVER, THAT THIS NEW GOA POSTURE DID NOT RELATE IN ANY WAY NOR INVOLVE ANY DISCUSSION OF THE IEA AND THAT THIS POSITION REMAINS UNCHANGED AT THIS TIME. BY CONTRAST, THE NEW ATTITUDE DOES CLEARLY APPLY IN THE CASE OF THE BORADER PRODUCER/CONSUMER DIALOGUE AND AUSTRALIA IS DEFINITELY INTERESTED, AS IS ALREADY ON RECORD, IN PARTICIPATION IN THE TWENTY SEVEN NATION MINISTERIAL MEETING WHICH IS ENVISAGED FOLLOWING A RESUMED PRE-PARATORY MEETING LATE IN 1975.

7. WE BELIEVE THAT NON OF THE FOREGOING SHOULD BE INTERPRETED AS EXCLUDING THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EVENTUAL MODIFICATION IN THE GOA POSITION ON IEA MEMBERSHIP. THIS WHOLE QUESTION WAS CLEARLY EXCLUDED FROM THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE RECENT INTERPARTMENTAL DECISIONS. MOREOVER THE TREND OF THE RECENT DECISIONS OBVIOUSLY IS BORADLY FAVORABLE TOWARD EVENTUAL FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE IEA POSSIBILITY. BUT THE PROSPECT OF AN AUSTRALIAN DECISION TO PARTICIPATE ON A BASIS WHICH INCIDES THE EMERGENCY PROGRAM IS NOW REMOTE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REASONS, QUITE ASIDE FROM ANY UNDERLYING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS. A MORE RESTRICTED PARTICIPATION, EVEN IF THE OPTION WERE AVAILABLE, SEEMS UNLIKELY BARRING THE PASSAGE OF TIME AND FURTHER EVOLUTION IN GOA THINKING.

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